

Foreign Policy

President Kennedy Is Hammering Out a Distinctive Approach Based on New Emphases and Priorities

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WASHINGTON—Soundings taken in the State Department and other Government agencies and in some foreign embassies convey the impression that a distinctive Kennedy foreign policy is being hammered out.

This is partly under the impact of events, partly in line with the advance views of the new President and his most trusted advisers. It is always tricky to estimate the influence of any individual in the shaping of Government decisions.

But among the men with whom the President is most frequently in touch on foreign affairs, along with such obvious figures as Secretary of State Rusk, Under-Secretary Bowles and U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, one may mention Allen W. Dulles, head of the C.I.A., two ex-professorial advisers from Cambridge, Mass., McGeorge Bundy and Walt Whitman Rostow, and Charles E. Bohlen, gifted Russian linguist and veteran expert on Soviet and Communist trends and designs.

There is no disposition to pull up past foreign policy by the roots, to renounce old alliances, to launch out on wild experiments. One man whose work brings him in frequent contact with the President describes him as "tough as nails, not an ounce of appeasement in him."

But certain new emphases and new priorities, which may or may not be vindicated by the test of experience, are beginning to show. First, there is much less idealism in Government notes and pronouncements. There are no illusions about the possibility of changing Soviet basic attitudes by soft words. But there is a tendency to treat the struggle with the Soviet Union more as a conflict of great power interests, less as a moral crusade.

Second, the United States is more committed to a tolerant, if not favorable view of neutralism as a stance that is not only the right of every sovereign state, but that may even, in some cases, be in the interests of the United States. There is no more talk of neutralism as "immoral." President Kennedy has taken pains to stress that what America wants in Laos is not a pro-American, but a "neutral and independent" Laos.

Consideration for India

India's views are receiving more consideration. The President has sent to India as Ambassador one of his best known brain-trusters, Harvard economist and former Treasury Secretary John K. Galbraith. It is expected that he will be expected to beat the anti-colonial drum pretty loudly. Adlai Stevenson's vote for an investigation of conditions in Portugal's African colony, Angola, G. Mennen Williams' pronouncement, "Africa is for the Africans," were not off-the-cuff assertions.

Wise or unwise, these are smaller moves based on the deliberate calculation that—

European overseas colonialism is now so moribund that it is no longer worth conciliating. On the other hand, much significance is attached to winning the trust and goodwill of the new African states. Only in this way, so it is argued, can the efforts of Soviet and Chinese Communism to obtain a foothold in the new Africa be counteracted.

Mr. G. Mennen Williams, on his recent 23-day incredibly active safari in Africa, worked as hard as if he were trying to win votes for another term as Governor of Michigan. When he encountered a mildly hostile demonstration in Zanzibar, headed by a native carrying a banner inscribed "Do you come as friend or foe?" Mr. Williams was not fazed for a moment. He rushed up to the demonstrator, shook hands with him, pressed an autograph on him and suggested that he strike out the questioning "or foe" from his banner.

Opinions differ as to the lasting effect of a trip of this kind. But some of the officials with African experience who accompanied Mr. Williams see hope in the moderate, reasonable attitude of such native leaders as Houphouët-Boigny in the Ivory Coast, Leopold Senghor in Senegal, Sylvanus Olympio in Togoland and Julius Nyerere in Tanganyika. Storm clouds are seen in Ethiopia, where there may be a repetition of the recent revolt against the old-fashioned rule of the Emperor, in Angola, in the Rhodesias, where the painful problem of working out a system of government acceptable to all races when one race has the advantage of numbers, the other of property and education, has not been solved.

The Congo Disquiet

And of course the Congo remains a source of disquiet, although "civil war" in that country is something like the conflicts between the old Chinese "warlords," something that is settled by bribes and arrangements rather than by bloody conflict. Some officials in Washington are as much disturbed by the curious attitude of the Indian representative of Dag Hammarskjöld in the Congo, Rajeshwar Dayal, as by any other aspect of the situation. Dayal seems to have gone out of his way to pick quarrels with the more moderate, anti-Communist Congolese leaders, with the result that the U.N. has begun to talk about equipping the Congolese union and to Congolese anti-Communist leaders such as Tshombe, Kasavubu and Mobutu.

Less moralistic determination, more tolerance for neutralism, more emphasis on colonialism and aversion to dictatorships, more theoretical openness for arms limitation schemes: These would seem to be the principal elements in the new look which American foreign policy is assuming under the new President.